

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SAM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

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FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2655

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT AO

SUBJECT: POLITICAL CLIMATE HEATS UP

1. SUMMARY: EVENTS OF WEEKEND INCLUDED RALLY OF 2000 BLACKS UNDER LIGA NACIONAL AFRICANA AUSPICES MAY 24; FIRST REAL MASS POLITICAL DEMONSTRATION BY SOME 5000 BLACKS AT PALACE AFTERNOON MAY 26; DISORDERLY, DAMGEROUS COUNTER-DEMONSTRATION BY SEVERAL HUNDRED WORKING CLASS WHITES EVENING MAY 26 (DURING AND FOLLOWING LENGTHY PRESS CONFERENCE BY MIN INTERTERRITORIAL COORDINATION). CINC HAS NOW ISSUED PROCLAMATION PROHIBITING FURTHER "STREET DEMONSTRATIONS," BUT SITUATION REMAINS POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. MAY 24 RALLY AT LIGA NACIONAL AFRICANA (LNA - PRIMARILY MESTIZO ORGANIZATION) WAS ORDERLY AND FEATURED DEMANDS FOR INDEPENDENCE NOW. SUB-THEME WAS NEED TO DISARM WHITE CIVILIANS AND RESPECT MULTIRACIALSIM. MEMBERS OF REBEL MOVEMENTS URGED TO RETURN TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WORK WITHIN POLITICAL FRAMEWORK.

3. MAY 26 DEMONSTRATION ACCORDING TO UNVERIFIED INFORMATION REACHING US WAS ORGANIZED BY LEFTIST MOVIMENTO DEMOCRATICO DE ANGOLA AS SURROGATE FOR MPLA, WITH LNA COLLABORATION. ARMED FORCES LAST WEEK HAD PREVENTED MDA FROM DISTRIBUTING MPLA HANDBILLS AND HAD ANNOUNCED THAT NO POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN NAME OR ON BEHALF OF REBEL GROUPS WOULD BE ALLOWED UNTIL CEASE-FIRE ACHIEVED.

4. NEVERTHELESS, EARLY IN AFTERNOON MAY 26 AROUND 5000 BLACKS ASSEMBLED AT LNA AND PROCEEDED TO PALACE TO HOLD ORDERLY DEMONSTRATION LASTING ABOUT TWO HOURS. CROWD 99 PERCENT AFRICAN. LEADERS DISTRIBUTED SOME 100 PLACARDS CALLING FOR IMMEDIATE INDEPENDENCE, SUPPORT FOR MPLA, UNITA AND FNLA. LEGENDS INCLUDED "WE WANT OUR LAND" (IN ENGLISH), "500 YEARS IS ENOUGHT," "DISARM CIVILIANS," AND "DOES ONE FREE PEOPLE SUPPRESS ANOTHER?" SOME REBEL MOVEMENT FLAGS SEEN.

5. CROWD'S MOOD WAS CIVIL, VERY SERIOUS, BUT NEVER THREATENED TO GET OUT OF HAND. CROWD CONTROL MANAGED BY BLACK LEADERSHIP WHO SUCCEEDED IN REDUCING CONTACT WITH POLICE (WHO OUT IN FORCE). NO EFFORT MADE BY POLICE OR BACK-UP MPS TO INTERFERE. DURING DEMONSTRATION ALMEIDA SANTOS APPEARED AT BALCONY OF PALACE AND ADDRESSED CROWD OVER BULLHORN FOR 15 MINUTES. HE WAS WILDLY ACCLAIMED BY CROWD. THE OTHER SPEAKERS WERE BLACK LAWYER DIOGENES BOAVIDA (WHOSE BROTHER IS MEDICAL DOCTOR WITH MPLA) AND LUCINDA ALMEIDA, BLACK WOMAN WHO DEMANDED IMMEDIATE INDEPENDENCE. BOTH SPOKE FROM BALCONY WITH ALMEIDA SANTOS STANDING BY.

6. SUBSEQUENTLY, DURING PRESS CONFERENCE, ALMEIDA SANTOS SAID HE AND CINC HAD AGREED TO ALLOW DEMONSTRATION INTER ALIA BECAUSE HIS CONTACTS WITH BLACK MAJORITY HAD BEEN INSUFFICIENT TO GAUGE THEIR MOOD, AND PURPOSE OF VISIT TO ANGOLA WAS PRECISELY TO FIND OUT WHAT PEOPLE WANT. HE PRAISED THEIR SHOW OF CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY, CONTRASTING IT INVIDIOUSLY WITH COUNTER-DEMONSTRATION BY HANDFUL OF WHITES WHICH FOLLOWED.

7. COUNTER-DEMONSTRATION WAS IN FACT STILL UNDERWAY AT THAT POINT. IT BEGAN WHEN SEVERAL HUNDRED WORKING CLASS WHITES (INCLUDING WOMEN AND SOME BABES-IN-ARMS) ARRIVED AT PALACE ABOUT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUNDOWN, AND LASTED UNTIL ALMEIDA SANTOS LEFT FOR AIRPORT. IN CONTRAST TO BLAAACKS, THIS CROWD WAS UNORGANIZED, UNRULY, AND IN UGLY MOOD. FOR A TIME THEY SUCCEEDED IN BLOCKING OFF ACCESS TO AREA IN FRONT OF PALACE WITH THEIR VEHICLES. MOB CHANTED "MARCELO - MARCELO," AND OTHER SLOGANS IN SUPPORT OF OLD REGIME, AND CALLED FOR RETURN OF DGS. POLICE MADE ONLY PERFUNCTORY ATTEMPT TO DISPERSE THEM; ON CONTRARY, THEY SEEMED TO SIDE WITH THEM.

8. ACCORDING TO PRESS GROUPS OF WHITES AND BLACKS ROAMED AROUND CITY DURING EVENING CAUSING SOME DAMAGE TO PARKED CARS AND SHOP WINDOWS.

9. IN RESPONSE TO THESE EVENTS (WHICH SEEM NOT TO HAVE SERIOUSLY DISTURBED CITY'S MORALE 24 HOURS LATER) CINC HAS ISSUED FORMAL ORDER PROHIBITING ANY "STREET DEMONSTRATIONS." POLITICAL RALLIES WILL BE ALLOWED, UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS (MAINLY ASSUMPTION OF RESPONSIBILITY BY LEADERS WHO MUST OBTAIN PRIOR PERMISSION FROM CINC.) REASONS GIVEN ARE THAT MAY 26 DEMONSTRATION BY BLACKS DISREGARDED HIS WISHES THAT THERE BE NO PROPAGANDA IN SUPPORT OF EMANCIPATION MOVEMENTS, THAT FOLLOWING DEMONSTRATION "PROVOCATEURS" HAD CAUSED SOME MATERIAL DAMAGE TO SHOPS AND AUTOMOBILES THROUGHOUT CITY, AND COUNTER-DEMONSTRATION BY WHITES PROTESTING BLACKS HAD GOTTEN OUT OF CONTROL AND ENDANGERED "PEACEFUL EVOLUTION."

10. COMMENT: ORGANIZERS AND LEADERS OF BLACKS (BOTH AT RALLY AND AT DEMONSTRATION) SHOWED PROFESSIONALISM AND SKILL. HEY ALSO MADE CLEAR WHERE REAL POLITICAL INTERESTS OF BLACKS ARE, AND SUCCEEDED IN PRODUCING LUANDA'S FIRST GENUINE POLITICAL EVENT SINCE APRIL 25. ALL OTHER DEMONSTRATIONS SO FAR HAVE BEEN MILD BY COMPARISON, WITH MOST "PARTICIPANTS" IN REALITY SPECTATORS. ARMY IN PROHIBITING FURTHER STREET DEMONSTRATION CHIEFLY MOTIVATED BY FEAR OF WHITE REDNECK ELEMENT. HAD COUNTER-DEMONSTRATION NUMBERED JUST A FEW MORE TROUBLEMAKERS, IT COULD EASILY HAVE GOTTEN OUT OF HAND. WE SEE MOUNTING (AND LEGITIMATE) DEMANDS BY BLACKS FOR DISARMING WHITES; THIS IS LIKELY TO BECOME CENTRAL TO ANY FORTHCOMING TALKS BETWEEN PORTUGUESE AND REBEL MOVEMENTS, BUT IS A PRACTICAL IMPOSSIBILITY AT THIS POINT. THUS SITUATION REMAINS POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE.

BRIGGS

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